



October 21, 2009

Gene Wilhoit, Executive Director
Council of Chief State School Officers
One Massachusetts Avenue, NW · Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001-1431

Dear Gene,

We have reviewed the College and Career Readiness Standards released on September 21, 2009 and agree with the revisions and the additions from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Governors Association (NGA). We are pleased to offer the continued support of the District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and State Board of Education (SBOE), and look forward to the release of the content standards for kindergarten through grade 12 early next year. We applaud the committee's efforts to move towards fewer, clearer, and higher standards and appreciate its review of the feedback provided and the changes made to strengthen the initiative.

OSSE and SBOE discussed the College and Career Readiness Standards with school districts, members of postsecondary community in DC, and the public, most of which were supportive of the work that's been done so far. For instance, Dr. Jonathan Gueverra, Chief Executive Officer of the Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC) testified at a public hearing emphasizing the importance of aligning standards to college readiness expectations, particularly to mitigate the remediation rate. Dr. Robert Mayo, testifying on behalf of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, pledged their support of the standards and the importance of graduating students prepared for the demands of post-secondary education, meaningful careers and to be able to compete and contribute globally.

After reviewing the standards, we are pleased to note the close alignment of the District's current English/Language Arts Standards with the End of High School Expectations. While we will need to shift to using more informational text and an expectation that all teachers integrate reading skills in their instruction, the new standards will provide the basis for OSSE to call for stronger reading and analytical skills across the board. We particularly appreciated the strengthening of the English/Language Arts expectations and the sample reading passages. Providing such specificity permits OSSE to better plan for the eventual, and hopefully speedy, adoption of these standards.

The mathematics content standards represent a more profound shift from the current DC standards, as they suggest a conceptual shift from algorithmic fluency to conceptual understanding. This shift to a deeper conceptual understanding of fewer topic areas will better prepare our students to move into higher education and the workforce. These new standards are crucial building blocks for higher-level mathematics.

Our biggest obstacle for a successful implementation will be the investment in significant and on-going professional development for teachers. OSSE has begun to consider the options for addressing the areas of greatest concerns for teachers and providing the necessary supports as we transition to these new standards. As noted in our comments on the first draft of the standards, we hope that CCSSO and NGA will support states by disseminating strategies and best practices around the necessary professional development.

The college readiness standards represent a first step in the right direction for students across the country and particularly for students in the District of Columbia. Higher and fewer standards will result in greater achievements for students, increased transparency for schools, and reduced costs for states – permitting states to create better and more precise measures of school accountability. The city is proud to be part of this effort. On behalf of the District of Columbia, we would like to thank you for your commitment to a better education system for all kids.

We look forward to reviewing the content standards for kindergarten through grade 12 and to begin the hard work of adoption and implementation. We are confident that the District's educational stakeholders share our interest, which we know will be vital in ensuring successful implementation. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Cathie Carothers, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary and Secondary Education, at cathie.carothers@dc.gov.

Sincerely,



Kerri L. Briggs, PhD.
State Superintendent of Education



Lisa Raymond
President, State Board of Education

cc: Mayor Adrian Fenty
Deputy Mayor Reinoso